



OFFICE OF THE
WATER DEPARTMENT
TOWN HALL, 511 MAIN STREET
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827-1313
(978) 649-4514 FAX (978) 649-8893
waterdept@dunstable-ma.gov

Water Commission Minutes
Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Approved: 3/2/22

John O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm
Other member(s) present: Mat Morton
Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level
In attendance:

Reviewed & Signed:

- All Bills Outstanding Since Last Meeting
- All Payroll Outstanding Since Last Meeting

Department Operations Update

Mr. Voelker briefly reported to the Commission on the events of the last Board of Selectmen's meeting and the urging of Roads Commissioner Martin to see the Board spend most if not all of the town's ARPA funds on water projects. The Board could not commit to that as there are a number of interests pressing for the use of those funds. Still, what they have committed to spend on water related projects is close to half the amount received by the town. The work agreed to is the piping down Westford Street that would complete a loop for the line currently running down Hillcrest Street. The pipe to go on Westford would run back to Main Street. Then a water main would be replaced on Main Street. The Commission understood that was the most likely result. Discussion then shifted to a lock left open on the town's well facilities. Mr. Morton reported that he'd heard about a lock found left open. It appears to be a maintenance matter for the gate the lock is on and a minor repair. Mr. O'Brien expressed some surprise that SWSS hadn't noticed it. But he was unwilling to try and seek repair work by them. Mr. Morton proposed asking Pepperell for ideas. Mr. O'Brien then turned discussion to talks he's had with the Town Administrator about rates. It was agreed that we should leave rates as they are for a while to ensure that sufficient funds are received for balancing the budget and seeing how the relationship with Pepperell develops. The Commission then discussed other matters such as the proposed Affordable Housing Project and any impact on the department as well as a few matters pertaining to the transition to Pepperell for water operations.

Approve Inter-Municipal Agreement with Town of Pepperell for Water Operator Services

Mr. O'Brien reported Pepperell has decided to forego a "mini" inter-municipal agreement. They are taking over the services and doing the work while they continue to push towards a full inter-municipal agreement. The agreement will likely be 3 years in duration. So the current start is February 10. The main thing to work on at the moment is emergency contacts and alarms. Mr. O'Brien specifically wanted to ensure that alarms go to Commissioners as well as department staff. Commissioners should know so that they can follow up with the operators to ensure services are restored. Mr. O'Brien noted that in particular he wished to avoid the situation that happened with the wells recently about 3 weeks ago. Investigation after the fact determined that the well that had shut off hadn't run for nearly 5 days. Mr. O'Brien was somewhat shocked that SWSS hadn't seen it. This is core to the dispute over the last billing from SWSS. SWSS also hasn't given us much substantiation on a number of requests. Mr. O'Brien asked Mr. Voelker if the town was comfortable with this being

essentially a “gentlemen’s agreement” until the inter-municipal agreement is signed. Mr. Voelker responded that it is a risk, but Pepperell has taken more of a risk in that they have hired additional staff on the predication of this agreement and therefore they have far more to lose if things were to fall through. So their interests are in obtaining the formal inter-municipal agreement. They’re just reviewing things very carefully. Mr. O’Brien asked about the base price again noting that Pepperell is charging about the same as SWSS. Mr. Voelker noted in response that the savings is in how much they’ll do for it. SWSS did less and charged for extras. Pepperell is willing to do a lot more than SWSS in the base cost. So that’s truly the savings for the department and ultimately the town. There is also the future hope of greater cooperation between the towns, not only on water but possibly fire services as well.

Next Meeting/Regular Meetings

The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for February 23, 2022. Although, given the proximity to the Presidents Day holiday. Mr. Morton proposed shifting the meeting to March 2, 2022. Then the next meeting could be March 30, 2022. This would work since March has five Wednesdays. It was so agreed.

Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll

The Commission considered and signed off on all of its outstanding bills. The Commission then reviewed and approved payment of the bills and also signed all outstanding department payroll. Mr. O’Brien then briefly reported on all bills he’d reviewed and approved since the last meeting in his capacity as chair. He noted these are the usual ones, utilities, alarm, and the like.

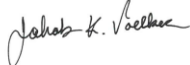
Minutes

The Commission considered the minutes from its meeting held on December 29, 2021. Seeing no reason to modify the minutes the Commission determined to accept the minute.

A motion was made by Mr. Morton to approve the minutes of December 29, 2021 as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. O’Brien and passed by majority vote.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. O’Brien at 6:35 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Morton and passed by majority vote.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker
Administrative Assistant, Dunstable Water Department